Non-tariff barriers on agricultural exports

326. SHRI SHARAD ANANTRAO JOSHI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the countries signatory to the Agreement on Agriculture under the World Trade Organisation (WTO) have prescribed different kinds of non-tariff barriers with a view to restricting their imports into their territories; and

(b) if so, the details of the non-tariff barriers prescribed by the countries importing agricultural produce from India in respect of these commodities?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) and (b) The Most Favoured Nation (MFN) Treatment requirement of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) does not permit any discrimination or restriction specific to Indian goods by other WTO Members. Moreover, WTO rules allow restrictions on imports of goods based on tariffs as agreed upon and also through specific non-tariff measures, including those based on balance of payment grounds, sanitary and phyto-sanitary measures, conformity with agreed/international standards and contingent protection measures like anti-dumping, subsidy and safeguard actions.

Nevertheless, non-tariff barriers, beyond agreed WTO rules, exist on import of goods from India in some WTO Member countries, including maintenance of sanitary and phyto-sanitary measurs at levels which are not readily justifiable on the basis of scientific evidence. Procedural requirements could also act as barriers to trade. Problems arising due to non-tariff barriers are duly taken up by Government with the concerned authorities of the country concerned either bilaterally with a view to their early and mutually satisfactory resolution or presented for resolution by the WTO's Dispute Settlement Mechanism. In the ongoing W TO negotiations, India has also co-sponsored proposals alongwith some other developing countries to disallow use of measures by developed countries that act as barriers to imports from developing countries.

Imports under Bangkok Agreement

327. SHRI T.T.V. DHINAKARAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the details of the agricultural produce and products which are imported in huge quantities under the Bangkok Agreement;